

December 3, 2018



Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 18-336 and CC Docket No. 92-105 regarding the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018.

Dear Madam,

Representing communities from all around Texas, United Ways of Texas (UWT) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the current effort undertaken by the Federal Communications Commission to study the feasibility of designating a three-digit number to the National Suicide Hotline and to assess the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Each day, Texas United Ways are fighting for the health, education and financial stability by investing in their communities, including 2-1-1. In Texas, 2-1-1 is a public-private partnership: the state manages oversight of a network of 25 call centers operated by community-based organizations across the state. 2-1-1 Texas is a free, anonymous, social service hotline available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Currently, 12 local United Ways in Texas manage 2-1-1 call centers and many of these organizations put in resources of their own over and above what the state provides to manage 2-1-1 call centers.

We acknowledge efforts are needed to create a safe place for all people to call – especially underserved or marginalized populations such as seniors, people with physical or intellectual disabilities, people that identify as LGBTQ+, Veterans, American Natives, non-English speakers, and individuals facing complex problems such as substance/opioid use, human trafficking, and domestic violence. Texas United Ways have a long history of reaching out to the underserved and today, our network partners with thousands of business, nonprofit agencies, and government stakeholders to solve their community's toughest problems like mental health and crisis and drive systemic change.

We encourage the FCC to consider our 2-1-1 work here in Texas as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since the FCC designation of 2-1-1 in 2000 and formal establishment of 2-1-1 as a statewide information and referral system in 2001, Texas United Ways have invested significant resources to the success of 2-1-1 and answer several million calls for help each year. Moreover, our network of nearly 70 Texas United Ways invest millions of dollars in community-based mental health, substance use, health, education, and other financial stability services each year. These critical investments position our network as key partners in the success of an improved mental health and crisis response system.

The creation of another three-digit code may erode the simplicity of a single point of access for community help. Despite concerted efforts by numerous social services, and multiple hotlines, in

our state to educate and market the distinctions, a person in crisis will likely always reach for the most familiar or most accessible number which in our state is 2-1-1. Also, our 2-1-1 network often receives calls that are better suited for 911, and 911 partners across Texas communities often receive calls that our network of 2-1-1's can best answer. Given the recognition of the 2-1-1 call number among Texans and capabilities of 2-1-1 call centers and their trained staff, we recommend that resources should be invested to improve a unified single point of access with a blended partnership of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and United Way's 2-1-1 services. We believe in the power of partnership to address gaps, not duplicate services, and will be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

You can learn more about 2-1-1 Texas at <https://www.211texas.org/>, and more about our network's role in 2-1-1 by visiting, <https://www.uwtexas.org/2-1-1-texas-local-information-and-referral>. For additional questions or discussion, feel free to call my office at 512-651-1149. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Adrianna Cuellar Rojas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Adrianna Cuellar Rojas
President & CEO
United Ways of Texas